



THE EXHORTER

“And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.” Acts 2:40

The Palmer Road church of Christ, Westland, Mi. (prchurchofchrist.org)

July 6, 2014

Jump Start # 1137

Revelation 14:13 *“And I heard a voice from Heaven, saying, ‘Write, ‘Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on!’ ‘Yes,’ says the Spirit, ‘so that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow with them.’”*

The death of the righteous is precious to the Lord. The angels are summoned from Heaven to whisk the soul into the comforts of paradise. God is with the person all the way. A dear friend is at the doorway of death. His journey here is just about over. It saddens our congregation. He is a giant in his own way. He never preached. He never led a song. That wasn't him. He served in other ways. He was the smile that greeted you when you entered the building. He was waiting with a hug just for you. Generous. Kind. Giving. Helpful. Sweet. Special. His kind set the temperature in the church. It was warm and friendly because of him. Any day now, the phone will ring and word will spread that he is gone. I have already been shaping my words for his funeral. We are waiting. It's time. He is already missed. What remains is not him. Seeing him grow weaker and weaker is not the vibrant, joyful person that we know.

Death is ugly. Death is painful. But thanks be to God, death is not the end. Our verse, one of many, reminds us that beyond death, there is something else. Death isn't the end. Our journey doesn't stop at the cemetery. My friend is moments away from feeling the best he has felt in years. Gone will be the torturous cancer that has taken his life. Gone are doctors, pills, shots, procedures, and feeling lousy. Gone forever. I believe his smile will return and joy will fill his heart again. He will be missed by hundreds, but especially by his dear family. But what joy awaits him and what a legacy he leaves us.

Our verse states that the deeds of the righteous follow them. It is the walk of faith that assures their place in Heaven as God promises. But those deeds. Those big and little things that were part of their lives, follow them. This is not to say that it is because

of deeds that they are saved. We are not saved by works. But rather, our deeds are known by God and they are left as footprints, for others to follow. It is those deeds, done by the righteous, that have helped us. Those patient teachers of God's word that shared the gospel with us and answered our questions. Those loving hearts that opened up their homes and invited us over for a meal and wonderful fellowship and joy. Those tender hearts that taught the children's classes. Those big hearts that sat with us in the surgery waiting room, or held our hands at the funeral homes, or kindly kicked us in the pants and got us going when we wanted to quit. We remember. We are better because of those things. It's those deeds, those wonderful, wonderful deeds, that follow.

It is those deeds that we remember later in life. We can never forget. It's those deeds that we try to repeat and show to others. We became better because of those deeds. Those wonderful, wonderful deeds remind us that he was a person who was selfless and had the heart of a servant. They came when we needed them. They didn't give up on us. They lived Christ. They believed. We are better because of them.

It is those deeds that we need to be about doing. Those deeds are our true jobs and occupation. It is being there for others. It is taking the time and going out of the way. It is helping. It is teaching. It is hugs and smiles. It is being generous. It is being forgiving. It is complementing. It is encouraging. That is our task. That is what we need to be about. It is those deeds that build churches, strengthen families and give hope to fainting hearts. The deeds of the righteous. They follow them. They are remembered. They are treasured.

My friend excelled in such deeds. The gifts, the kindness, the love he showed was felt by many, but especially me. Now it's time for him to leave this room. God has another room awaiting him. He will love it. Now who will fill his place? Now who will pick up where he left off? My heart wants to hold his hand and go with him. We have talked about this so many times. I have talked about this subject with him more than any other person. We have studied it. We have asked questions. We have wondered about it. We have explored it as best as we could. I know he knows. I know he believes. He is ready. The door will open and he will enter the next room. What confidence, faith and hope he has. For him, I am so glad. We send him off with the best hope and prayers. The door will shut until it's our time to enter the next room. I expect he'll be near the door, arms opened, ready to give each of us a hug. That's just the way he is.

I'm thankful at this Independence time that God gives us freedom from the toils of this life. I'm thankful for other rooms that we do not see. I'm thankful for good and righteous people, like Billy, who chose to make a difference. His deeds follow. His deeds will not be forgotten. His deeds have helped. His deeds have made a difference.

And now, the rest of us must return to life. Our deeds? What are we doing? Are we too obsessed with self to notice others? Are we too busy with jobs to be about our real jobs-the deeds of the righteous? Are we failing to do what is most important and what

makes the greatest impact? What will follow you? What will the righteous remember about you?

Thank you, Lord. Thank you for sharing Billy with us.
Roger Shouse